

# SERMON NOTES Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021

## sunnysidechurch

### **Theme: Mary and her Song**

Main passage: **Luke 1:39-50** Additional Readings: **Luke 1:26-38**

### **Some of the main themes from the sermon**

#### **How well do we know Mary?**

It seems to me that the less well we know someone the easier we find it to describe them (for good or ill) in a single word or phrase. When it comes to people we know well, we're aware of the complexities and contradictions in their make-up, that make them the unique individuals that they are. If we look at the way Mary has been portrayed down the centuries, I wonder if we have failed fully to appreciate the sensitivity and complexity that Luke records.

#### **Hearing God's voice**

Mary's call from the angel Gabriel was a hard call. Mary knew that but even she could never have guessed just how costly it would become for her. Her willing response to Gabriel in Luke 1:38 marks her as a person of real stature. Her decision to 'be the Lord's servant' must have felt lonely and perilous. Seeing Elizabeth (v41-45) must have reassured her and caused her dread in equal measure.

#### **Mary the theologian**

It is in Mary's song that we learn that this is no mere cypher carrying God's child but an intelligent, well versed and strong young woman. She looks beyond her own situation and sees that God, in choosing her, is being true to Himself. She makes sense of her role in the context of who God is and how he has behaved over the centuries. (v50-52)

#### **Mary the feisty**

She has a self-knowledge that is amazing and this enables her to embrace her humble role with real strength. She **CHOOSES** to be God's servant. Had she not done so, God's redeeming plan would never have come about.

#### **Mary, God's servant**

In the last two verses of Mary's song (v54-55), she shifts the focus from herself and what God is doing in her life to take in the impact of what God will do through the life of her Son. She realises that, in fulfilling the promises He made to Abraham (that through his offspring all nations would be blessed (Gen 22:17-18)). Mary probably only has an inkling at this stage of just what this will mean for Jesus and for her. However, as Jesus grows up, Mary will look back on these

words she has sung and see just how costly her own obedience was. Not for nothing did Simeon prophesy that 'a sword will go through your own heart', when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised. (Luke 2:34)

#### **The cost of discipleship for Mary**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that true discipleship is always costly. It means giving up all that **we** want and surrendering to God. We see this again and again in Mary's life. At her meeting with the Angel Gabriel, in her song, when the young Jesus was lost for 3 days, at the wedding in Cana and at the foot of the cross. I am sure, though, that at any stage, if we'd asked her, Mary would say that she had no regrets. She would do it all again. Thank God for her.

#### **Closing reflections**

1. Every year, at Advent and Christmas, I find myself in awe at the perilous nature of God's plan of salvation and of the great trust He puts in his followers.
2. Mary did see the full fruition of her obedience as she, with the disciples saw her Son overcome death. (Acts 1:14)

#### **Some questions for thought and discussion this week:**

1. *Think about those people that you are inclined to dismiss. Is it because you have never tried to understand them and the complexities of their lives and personalities? What can you do about this?*
2. *Mary was a spiritual heavyweight in her own right. Of the aspects of her person explored in the sermon which most make you admire her?*
3. *Mary was called to a life of costly discipleship. What does costly discipleship mean to you and can you think of other people who have been examples to you of costly discipleship?*
4. *How do you discern whether you are truly hearing a call from God?*
5. *For all the pain of her repeated letting go of her child, Mary was able to be present after Jesus' resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:14), so she knew that God had kept his promise to her and to his people. How do you respond to this?*
6. *Are there any other issues that the sermon or the bible passages raise for you?*